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fact, the theology of the schools and the theology of the woods and fields, so well together, — to pass from Aristotle to the Atonement, from the Apocrypha to the Ark, from Ballou to Buddha, with no sense of incongruity or discord; to read on the same page of Belsham and Belshazzar, of Brigitta and the Bridgewater Treatises, and on successive pages of Balaam's Ass, of the Assassins of Syria, and of the Presbyterian Assembly. If the future volumes of the Cyclopædia shall fulfil the promise of that which has appeared, we can safely commend the work as not only solid and instructive for use and reference, but entertaining for reading in lighter hours.

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12. — *The Life and Death of Jason: a Poem.* By WILLIAM MORRIS. Boston: Roberts Brothers. 12mo. pp. 307.

IN this poetical history of the fortunate — the unfortunate — Jason, Mr. Morris has written a book of real value. It is some time since we have met with a work of imagination of so thoroughly satisfactory a character, — a work read with an enjoyment so unalloyed and so untempered by the desire to protest and to criticise. The poetical firmament within these recent years has been all alive with unpropheied comets and meteors, many of them of extraordinary brilliancy, but most of them very rapid in their passage. Mr. Morris gives us the comfort of feeling that he is a fixed star, and that his radiance is not likely to be extinguished in a draught of wind, — after the fashion of Mr. Alexander Smith, Mr. Swinburne, and Miss Ingelow. Mr. Morris's poem is ushered into the world with a very florid birthday speech from the pen of the author of the too famous "Poems and Ballads," — a circumstance, we apprehend, in no small degree prejudicial to its success. But we hasten to assure all persons whom the knowledge of Mr. Swinburne's enthusiasm may have led to mistrust the character of the work, that it has to our perception nothing in common with this gentleman's own productions, and that his article proves very little more than that his sympathies are wiser than his performance. If Mr. Morris's poem may be said to remind us of the manner of any other writer, it is simply of that of Chaucer; and to resemble Chaucer is a great safeguard against resembling Swinburne.

"The Life and Death of Jason," then, is a narrative poem on a Greek subject, written in a genuine English style. With the subject all reading people are familiar, and we have no need to retrace its details. But it is perhaps not amiss to transcribe the few pregnant lines of prose into which, at the outset, Mr. Morris has condensed the argument of his poem: —

"Jason the son of Æson, king of Iolchos, having come to man's estate, demanded of Pelias his father's kingdom, which he held wrongfully. But Pelias answered, that if he would bring from Colchis the golden fleece of the ram that had carried Phryxus thither, he would yield him his right. Whereon Jason sailed to Colchis in the ship *Argo*, with other heroes, and by means of Medea, the king's daughter, won the fleece; and carried off also Medea; and so, after many troubles, came back to Iolchos again. There, by Medea's wiles, was Pelias slain; but Jason went to Corinth, and lived with Medea happily, till he was taken with the love of Glauce, the king's daughter of Corinth, and must needs wed her; whom also Medea destroyed, and fled to Ægeus at Athens; and not long after Jason died strangely."

The style of this little fragment of prose is not an unapt measure of the author's poetical style, — quaint, but not too quaint, more Anglo-Saxon than Latin, and decidedly laconic. For in spite of the great length of his work, his manner is by no means diffuse. His story is a long one, and he wishes to do it justice; but the movement is rapid and business-like, and the poet is quite guiltless of any wanton lingering along the margin of the subject-matter, — after the manner, for instance, of Keats, — to whom, individually, however, we make this tendency no reproach. Mr. Morris's subject is immensely rich, — heavy with its richness, — and in the highest degree romantic and poetical. For the most part, of course, he found not only the great *contours*, but the various incidents and episodes, ready drawn to his hand; but still there was enough wanting to make a most exhaustive drain upon his ingenuity and his imagination. And not only these faculties have been brought into severe exercise, but the strictest good taste and good sense were called into play, together with a certain final gift which we hardly know how to name, and which is by no means common, even among very clever poets, — a comprehensive sense of form, of proportion, and of real completeness, without which the most brilliant efforts of the imagination are a mere agglomeration of ill-reconciled beauties. The legend of Jason is full of strangely constructed marvels and elaborate prodigies and horrors, calculated to task heavily an author's adroitness. We have so pampered and petted our sense of the ludicrous of late years, that it is quite the spoiled child of the house, and without its leave no guest can be honorably entertained. It is very true that the atmosphere of Grecian mythology is so entirely an artificial one, that we are seldom tempted to refer its weird, anomalous denizens to our standard of truth and beauty. Truth, indeed, is at once put out of the question; but one would say beforehand, that many of the creations of Greek fancy were wanting even in beauty, or at least in that ease and simplicity which has been acquired in modern times by force of culture. But habit and tradition have reconciled us to these things in their native

forms, and Mr. Morris's skill reconciles us to them in his modern and composite English. The idea, for instance, of a *flying ram*, seems, to an undisciplined fancy, a not especially happy creation, nor a very promising theme for poetry; but Mr. Morris, without diminishing its native oddity, has given it an ample romantic dignity. So, again, the sowing of the dragon's teeth at Colchis, and the springing up of mutually opposed armed men, seems too complex and recondite a scene to be vividly and gracefully realized; but as it stands, it is one of the finest passages in Mr. Morris's poem. His great stumbling-block, however, we take it, was the necessity of maintaining throughout the dignity and prominence of his hero. From the moment that Medea comes into the poem, Jason falls into the second place, and keeps it to the end. She is the all-wise and all-brave helper and counsellor at Colchis, and the guardian angel of the returning journey. She saves her companions from the Circean enchantments, and she withholds them from the embraces of the Sirens. She effects the death of Pelias, and assures the successful return of the Argonauts. And finally — as a last claim upon her interest — she is slighted and abandoned by the man of her love. Without question, then, she is the central figure of the poem, — a powerful and enchanting figure, — a creature of barbarous arts, and of exquisite human passions. Jason accordingly possesses only that indirect hold upon our attention which belongs to the Virgilian Æneas; although Mr. Morris has avoided Virgil's error of now and then allowing his hero to be contemptible.

A large number, however, of far greater drawbacks than any we are able to mention could not materially diminish the powerful beauty of this fantastic legend. It is as rich in adventure as the *Odyssey*, and very much simpler. Its prime elements are of the most poetical and delightful kind. What can be more thrilling than the idea of a great boatful of warriors embarking upon dreadful seas, not for pleasure, nor for conquest, nor for any material advantage, but for the simple recovery of a jealously watched, magically guarded relic? There is in the character of the object of their quest something heroically unmarketable, or at least unavailable. But of course the story owes a vast deal to its episodes, and these have lost nothing in Mr. Morris's hands. One of the most beautiful — the well-known adventure of Hylas — occurs at the very outset. The beautiful young man, during a halt of the ship, wanders inland through the forest, and, passing beside a sylvan stream, is espied and incontinently loved by the water nymphs, who forthwith "detach" one of their number to work his seduction. This young lady assumes the disguise and speech of a Northern princess, clad in furs, and in this character sings to her victim "a sweet song, sung not yet to

any man." Very sweet and truly lyrical it is, like all the songs scattered through Mr. Morris's narrative. We are, indeed, almost in doubt whether the most beautiful passages in the poem do not occur in the series of songs in the fourteenth book. The ship has already touched at the island of Circe, and the sailors, thanks to the earnest warnings of Medea, have abstained from setting foot on the fatal shore; while Medea has, in turn, been warned by the enchantress against the allurements of the Sirens. As soon as the ship draws nigh, these fair beings begin to utter their irresistible notes. All eyes are turned lovingly on the shore, the rowers' charmed muscles relax, and the ship drifts landward. But Medea exhorts and entreats her companions to preserve their course. Jason himself is not untouched, as Mr. Morris delicately tells us, — "a moment Jason gazed." But Orpheus smites his lyre before it is too late, and stirs the languid blood of his comrades. The Sirens strike their harps amain, and a conflict of song arises. The Sirens sing of the cold, the glittering, the idle delights of their submarine homes; while Orpheus tells of the warm and pastoral landscapes of Greece. We have no space for quotation; of course Orpheus carries the day. But the finest and most delicate practical sense is shown in the alternation of the two lyrical arguments, — the soulless sweetness of the one, and the deep human richness of the other. There is throughout Mr. Morris's poem a great unity and evenness of excellence, which make selection and quotation difficult; but of impressive touches in our reading we noticed a very great number. We content ourselves with mentioning a single one. When Jason has sown his bag of dragon's teeth at Colchis, and the armed fighters have sprang up along the furrows, and under the spell contrived by Medea have torn each other to death: —

"One man was left, alive but wounded sore,
Who, staring round about and seeing no more
His brothers' spears against him, fixed his eyes
Upon the queller of those mysteries.
Then dreadfully they gleamed, and with no word,
He tottered towards him with uplifted sword.
But scarce he made three paces down the field,
Ere chill death seized his heart, and on his shield
Clattering he fell."

We have not spoken of Mr. Morris's versification nor of his vocabulary. We have only room to say that, to our perception, the first in its facility and harmony, and the second in its abundance and studied simplicity, leave nothing to be desired. There are of course faults and errors in his poem, but there are none that are not trivial and easily pardoned in the light of the fact that he has given us a work of con-

summate art and of genuine beauty. He has foraged in a treasure-house; he has visited the ancient world, and come back with a massive cup of living Greek wine. His project was no light task, but he has honorably fulfilled it. He has enriched the language with a narrative poem which we are sure that the public will not suffer to fall into the ranks of honored but uncherished works, — objects of vague and sapient reference, — but will continue to read and to enjoy. In spite of its length, the interest of the story never flags, and as a work of art it never ceases to be pure. To the jaded intellects of the present moment, distracted with the strife of creeds and the conflict of theories, it opens a glimpse into a world where they will be called upon neither to choose, to criticise, nor to believe, but simply to feel, to look, and to listen.

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13. — 1. *King René's Daughter. A Danish Lyrical Drama.* By HENRIK HERTZ. Translated by THEODORE MARTIN. 16mo. pp. xii., 100.
2. *Frithiof's Saga, from the Swedish of ESAIAS TEGNÉR, Bishop of Wexiö.* By the REV. WILLIAM LEWERY BLACKLEY, M. A. First American Edition, edited by BAYARD TAYLOR. New York: Leypoldt and Holt. 1867. 16mo. pp. xxx., 201.

THE English-speaking nations, having so rich a literature of their own, and having had remarkably poor luck in their translations, have neglected many of the best literary productions of other countries. In America, any acquaintance with literatures other than French, German, and the classics is reserved for rare scholars. It is an excellent design of Messrs. Leypoldt and Holt to endeavor to overcome the barriers of our ignorance, by publishing and reprinting for us a series of poems which are in a certain sense representative of other nations. The two volumes named above are the beginning of this series, and we are promised others from German, French, Italian, Spanish, Norwegian, Russian, and Sanskrit.

To render such a series successful, not merely from a business point of view, — which of course with a publisher is the first thing to be considered, — but in the favor of the public, and to make it of any use in influencing taste, great care should be taken in selecting and editing the various poems. It is necessary to choose the best poems of two classes, — those that are universal in feeling and sentiment, and those that have a peculiar flavor of nationality about them and carry us at once to their native land. Each work should be intrusted to a scholar acquainted with the language of the original, and possessed of poetical sense and